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RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA IMMEDIATE 0215  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 0744  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0713  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 RIYADH 001894

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STATE PASS TO ASHLEY BAGWELL, NSC PASS TO ADNAN KIFAYAT,  
TREASURY PASS TO AMANDA CURTIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/08/2017  
TAGS: [EFIN](#) [ETTC](#) [KTFN](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: TERRORIST FINANCE: DESIGNATION OF FIVE SAUDIS

REF: A. STATE 121245 B. RIYADH 08825 C. PARIS 3740

Classified By: Ambassador Ford Fraker for Reasons 1.5 (b), (d), and (g)  
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11. (S/NF) Summary: On September 5, Post's Terrorism Finance Coordinator delivered reftel A points to the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stressing USG's interest in submitting a request to the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee on or about September 12. Embassy Riyadh fully supports the objectives of the designation process. We have concerns regarding the designation of Shaykhs Safar al-Hawali and Salman bin Fahd al-Awdah. The Saudi Ministry of Interior (MOI) considers both clerics instrumental in the MOI's "War of Ideas," a highly effective counter-radicalization initiative that seeks to discredit al-Qa,ida (reftel B). The Saudi government is unlikely to take action against these two prominent clerics given their proven utility in undermining and counteracting terrorist propaganda unless more recent and credible evidence is presented. Moreover, the SAG appears to consider the two clerics part of the political mainstream and may be wary of generating political opposition among Hawali's and Awdah,s large body of followers. A designation of clerics could well be perceived by the Saudis as an attempt to undercut their efforts to deter radical preaching through co-optation of Islamic leaders. Many Saudis may see such a move as anti-Islamic. Moreover, we note that the French government, according to reftel C, would oppose their designation. End Summary.

In Saudi Context  
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12. (S/NF) Both Hawali and Awdah are prominent clerics who have provided inspiration to, and have contacts with, extremist figures in Saudi Arabia and abroad. However, Post is unable to find any recent or credible evidence that either cleric is directly supporting terrorist groups. Both Hawali and Awdah are former professors whose vocal opposition to the Al Saud in the early 1990s brought them to the forefront of the "As-Sahwa al-Islamiya," or Islamic Awakening -- a reform movement that originally gained prominence for its strong criticism of the Saudi government's decision to host U.S. troops during the Gulf War.

13. (S/NF) Post notes that Hawali,s statements tend to be more extreme and there are uncorroborated reports that he privately continues fund-raising activity. Because of

Hawali,s past prominence, his name continues to be associated with anti-U.S. activity and public criticism of U.S. policies. In summer 2006, a high-profile Taliban financier identified Hawali as the primary collector of contributions that support the Taliban. As of early January 2007, Hawali called for a Support the Iraqi People, conference in Turkey. Hawali was also the founder of the Campaign to Resist Aggression,, the aim of which was to oppose the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Additionally, Hawali is active in a range of Islamic charities, some of which were implicated in supporting jihad, such as the al-Haramayn Foundation.

¶4. (S/NF) Detainees in Iraq credited Hawali for previously providing religious and financial support, although the extent of the cleric's current support -- specially since his 2004 stroke -- remains unclear. Hawali's public visibility declined following hospitalization in mid-2005 for brain surgery, after which he was reportedly visited by government officials. He is reported to have had a second stroke in ¶2006. Since then, Hawali is rarely seen in public or heard in audio recordings, and we suspect that much of his recent published criticism of the United States may be the work of his staff and supporters who are trading on his name. Post's Global Research Planning Office (GRPO) reported in early April 2007 that Hawali was still very sick and that he and his family were currently receiving financial support from friends and relatives.

¶5. (S/NF) The Saudi government arrested both Hawali and Awdah in 1994 for sedition for criticizing the Saudi government. Following their release in 1999, both Hawali and Awdah moderated their public statements and have appeared since to

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be working in concert with the Saudi government's campaign to discredit al-Qa,ida by publicly denouncing terrorism. Both Hawali and Awdah signed a public condemnation of the al-Qa,ida May 2003 compound bombings in Riyadh. Hawali is said to have urged Saudi extremists to surrender to security services and played a role in negotiating the surrender of Saudi militants. Hawali mediated the June 2003 surrender of Abu Bakr al-Azdi. At the time, al-Azdi was the most wanted al-Qa,ida cell leader and the subject of the highest level U.S.-Saudi discussion because of his role in plotting a catastrophic attack in the United States. In 2004, he facilitated the surrender of Uthman al-Amri - one of Saudi Arabia,s most wanted terrorists. The SAG invited both Hawali and Awdah to participate in the first National Dialogue conference with other prominent scholars to discuss religious issues in 2004.

#### Al-Qa,ida Links

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6.(S/NF) Post notes there is little evidence to suggest that Hawali and Awdah were recruiting and providing financial support for al-Qa,ida during the last four years. Both were imprisoned from 1994 to 1999 and have been watched closely thereafter by the Saudi government. As previously noted, Hawali is now largely considered an invalid following his strokes. Post is unaware of any major al-Qa,ida-linked attacks in Saudi Arabia in 1994, as noted in reftel. In addition, Post notes that neither Hawali nor Awdah had a role in the founding of al-Qa,ida or its local Arabian Peninsula franchise; neither cleric ever acted as spokesmen for al-Qa,ida. Saudi al-Qa,ida never had a political wing -- the closest thing to a propaganda apparatus was led by Yusif al- Iyari, Issa al- Awashan, and Abd al-Aziz al-Unayzi, all of whom are either deceased or imprisoned.

#### Sururiya Movement and Al-Qa,ida

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¶7. (S/NF) Post notes that while individual members of the Sururiya movement might support al-Qa,ida, there is no

evidence to suggest that the entire movement is actively supporting al-Qa,ida at the direction of Awdah or Hawali.

18. (S/NF) The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia takes every opportunity to highlight its commitment to comply with all UNSCR 1267 Sanctions Committee designations, including designations of Saudi nationals and organizations in Saudi Arabia. The SAG continues to take proactive steps to deter radical preaching through the Ministry of Interior's War of Ideas, a counter-radicalization initiative; monitors radical clerics; co-opts radical clerics; and removes uncooperative radical clerics. The success of this program hinges on the SAG's ability to leverage conservative clerics in support of the Government's message and initiatives. Hawali and Awdah play a major role in reinforcing the credibility of the Saudi government's message of condemning terrorism, endorsing moderation, attacking al-Qa,ida, and discouraging Saudis from fighting in Iraq. Their previous activities and backgrounds are useful in legitimizing the Saudi government's attempts to discredit Islamic extremism.

19. (S/NF) The SAG has avoided publicly criticizing the two clerics in recent years and implicitly recognizes them as legitimate voices. For example, Awdah has a well-established website, Islam Today; a weekly television talk show on the Saudi-owned television network MBC; and is covered regularly in the Arabic press. Both clerics have a long history of interaction with the SAG and appear to have direct access to senior officials, including Assistant Interior Minister Prince Muhammad bin Nayif. While Hawali and Awdah remain vocal critics of the U.S. presence in Iraq, both support official Saudi policy discouraging Saudi youth from going to Iraq.

10.(S/NF) Comment: The Saudi government is unlikely to take action against these two prominent clerics given their proven utility in the MOI,s War of Ideas unless more recent and credible evidence is presented. Moreover, the SAG appears to consider the two clerics part of the political and religious mainstream and may be wary of generating political opposition

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among Hawali and Awdah,s large body of followers. The designation of clerics that the MOI considers part of its War of Ideas counter-radicalization initiative could well be perceived by the Saudis as an attempt to undercut their efforts to deter radical preaching through co-optation. Moreover, such a move could be perceived by the Saudi public as anti-Islamic and thereby make it more difficult for the SAG to cooperate with the USG in the broader designation process. End Comment.  
FRAKER